

BENGAL HAGGIS

OF THIS BOOK

*THERE ARE TWO EDITIONS, BOTH LIMITED:
ONE OF 35 COPIES, NUMBERED 1 TO 35, ON
A BRITISH HANDMADE PAPER; THE OTHER
OF 1800 COPIES ON ANTIQUE DE LUXE PAPER.*

BENGAL HAGGIS

The Lighter Side of Indian Life

BY

W. A. J. ARCHBOLD

FORMERLY PRINCIPAL OF THE DACCA, MUIR CENTRAL, AND AIIGARH
COLLEGES IN INDIA, AND LATE SCHOLAR OF PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON: THE SCHOLARTIS PRESS
5 NEW OXFORD STREET, W.C. 1

1928

Printed in Great Britain by
NEILL & Co., LTD., EDINBURGH.

TO THE INDULGENT READER

THESE trifles are chosen from a number of similar articles which appeared originally in the "Statesman." They were meant to enliven the Sabbatic rest of the Anglo-Indian, as he was then called, and to prevent him from thinking too much about the great things he was doing, and the small amount of appreciation his meritorious services were receiving at the hands of a benign Government and an enlightened public. There were other considerations of course. The Englishman did not always go to church; he was not always out shooting on Sundays, though there is a tombstone in a Dacca cemetery which records that one who did was duly and properly swallowed by a tiger of opinions more orthodox than his breakfast. He had, in short, a fallow mind, and it was a duty to sow the good seed when a chance offered. Those who have tried to teach an English official in India anything when he is not working, will agree with the author that one must approach him delicately, and he leaves it to a generous public to decide how far he was successful in his difficult

BENGAL HAGGIS

and dangerous task. I am delighted, however, to know that my humble efforts for the general well-being met with the approval not only of some—not all of course, “that were too much”—of some of those for whom they were primarily intended, but also that the Bengalis were pleased to take interest in them. I hasten to lay claim to this peculiar felicity, because it is something to satisfy both “the rapacious invader” and “the crafty aborigine” at one stroke, so to speak, of the pen. It evinces possibly the possession of some special grace or unction. Few viceroys can say as much.

We make a great mistake in being too serious in India, and above all in taking the Bengali too seriously. He, poor fellow, not having been at Rugby and Balliol (the names can be varied at pleasure), still has a hearty laugh in him, and, if we but knew it, sees a good deal to smile at in us and our ways. And I rejoice to be able to tell my fellow-countrymen that one of the things that provokes his most indulgent mirth is our painstaking and conscientious effort to turn him into the Oriental counterpart of “the baldheaded man on the Brixton bus.” Dear child of sunshine! it will be long before we are able to do that, I trust. But we keep on trying, and our panting labours show our bulldog breed. We mean to make India

TO THE INDULGENT READER

into a reproduction of our own democratic little island, and whether the Indian likes it or not he has got to toe the line. He is above all things a philosopher, and he does what the sahib tells him to do. Wonderful is it not, he thinks, that some folks should be so fussy! Of course there are limits, as the French say. And there is the question of the goal of it all, which has not perhaps received sufficient attention; it takes so much trouble to get the poor Indian into line that we have not quite thought out where he is marching to.

But I grow serious, and that is the last thing I wish. Returning to the lighter side of things, I have observed of late that many people take the deepest interest in Dr Barnes and the Prayer Book who neither listen to the one nor read the other. In the same way many people are interested in India who never go there; I don't mean statesmen, but sensible ordinary people. And hence I hope that a certain—shall we say a pecuniarily sufficient?—number of the intelligentsia of this England of ours may be willing in a tolerant way to buy and perhaps to read this book. It will show them some features of Indian life which travellers of great industry and curiosity have entirely overlooked.

BENGAL HAGGIS

As I write these few lines by way of introduction the old Decca days come back to me, and I think of the many Bengali friends who used to laugh with me when I lived among them. Alas! I shall see them no more. I can but thank them—a very poor recompense—for making my life in old Bengal such a happy one.

I have also to express my cordial thanks to the authorities of the “Statesman” and to Messrs Thacker, Spink & Co., who published an Indian Edition of most of these sketches, for their kindness in allowing me to reprint them.

W. A. J. ARCHBOLD.

SELWYN CROFT, CAMBRIDGE.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We thank Mr T. N. Foulis for his permission to use the sub-title.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TO THE INDULGENT READER . . .	5
FACT AND FICTION	13
THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM	23
THE INDIAN CRAFTSMAN	33
THE AMENITIES OF BRIDGE	41
THE INDIAN SPORTSMAN	51
A VANISHING CROP IN BENGAL	61
SIMLA REVISITED	69
THE MYSTERIES OF GOLF	79
SHILLONG	89
GETTING ON	99
A DACCA DREAM	107
WAS SHAKESPEARE A BENGALI ?	117
COMMISSIONS	125

FACT AND FICTION

FACT AND FICTION

WHEN I first heard that I was destined to be one of those who have made India what she is, I knew very little about the place. I had a notion that it was the country where they grew tigers and guava jelly. Indians were chiefly associated in my mind with Fenimore Cooper, the sort of men who, when they were near, made one pass one's hand gently over the top of one's head to see that it was still there. It is true that I had a kind of great-uncle who had been out there, but he dated from pre-Mutiny times, and his methods of dealing with Indian questions—he did not call them “problems,” because they did not seem problems to his simple mind—had a directness and vigour which, though refreshing, might be felt to be somewhat out of drawing in these more enlightened days. So I felt that I must attack the subject through literature.

I first read stories of Anglo-India, and found that there was a wicked place called Simla where

people flirted till three in the morning and faced the difficulties of empire after a light but late breakfast, say a pickled walnut and a glass of green Chartreuse. When you had a particularly knotty job on hand you bit your moustache, swallowed a three-finger peg, whatever that may be, and swore in a quiet and gentlemanly kind of way. Then there were the plains, dotted over, so I made out, with stations—a kind of settlement, I thought, filled with officials and planters, where there was lots of pigsticking—a mysterious pastime—and where people gave dinner-parties and dances and had more pegs in moments of doubt and agitation, but where on the whole you had a good time provided you didn't die. People never, it would seem, died in Simla—perhaps they knew too well where they would go to—but there was a good deal of dying of a pathetic kind in the plains. Husbands of skittish wives popped off in the most seasonable manner, and undesirable lovers did the same, often in very curious ways. I remember one gentleman who, when things were getting critical, dived into a dry swimming-bath and cracked even his stupid skull. Then there were those of both sexes who simply had to die for the sake of the

FACT AND FICTION

story. The overwrought official whose accounts got all wrong and who was therefore, rather naturally it seemed to me, misunderstood in high quarters; he had to go. So had the wives of the dashing pigstickers if there were any eligible heroines to be provided for, and they seemed to get out of the way very nicely and gently, with the station chaplain—who must have acquired a good death-bed manner in some places—in attendance. The same reverend gentleman filled up the gap after a respectable interval. Some ladies survived: the Mrs O'Dowds, toughish no doubt, useful in mutinies or when funerals had to be arranged, but not personally attractive. Probably they added to the gaiety of Cheltenham later on.

There were other things mentioned which somewhat alarmed an intending visitor. Coffins, I was told, were carried in the guard's van of every express train for the convenience of those who needed them on the journey, and, thinking the matter out, I estimated that there was probably a truckload at the tail of an ordinary. One gets used to everything. A tourist of repute ended a chapter of warning with the suggestive and ominous reflection, "Danger lurks within the salad." What danger? What

indeed! And there was the naturally connected thought, On what footing would one be with regard to trifle? Dare one risk oysters in such a land?

If you lift up the carpet in an Indian bungalow, so a friend told me, you will find a nest of cobras; and it seemed just as dangerous not to lift it up, as another man said that most snakes lie quietly until you tread on them, and then they go for you. The way to escape from a snake, it seemed, was not to run away, but to stand quite still and let it coil up your leg. Soothed by the warmth it would then go to sleep, and so apparently might you. This scheme appeared to harmonise with what I had read in my youth as to the right method of dealing with a tiger if, armed with nothing more powerful than an umbrella, you met one when out for a morning stroll in a narrow path. The idea of putting one's foot between the horns of a bull when he lowers his head to charge, which came from the same valuable source, might also, I thought, be a useful tip for India.

Then I tackled a volume on household management in the East. It was cheering, as it gave me the impression—I am afraid that I have not found it realised in later days—that

FACT AND FICTION

I could live on next to nothing. This fitted in with my great-uncle's picturesque conversation. He always, he said, got fowls in exchange for the empty beer bottles, and money, he seemed to think, was hardly necessary in the mofussil. He however, I found, belonged to a greater, though in some respects a ruder, age. Furniture too seemed very cheap, in the book, and as it was everlasting, apparently, it passed on from man to man, like Tennyson's "Brook." Ah! if chairs and tables could talk, what stories they could tell! The idea is poetical, and I believe original, but perhaps on the whole it's as well that they can't. It never does to know too much, especially in India.

When I got to the promised land I set to work hard to unlearn what I had been told. I found that until I knew something myself I had better sink my identity in that of a greater mind than my own. So I hired an English-speaking bearer. He did not know too much English—that would have been a nuisance, as I did not want intellectual instruction. No, his qualifications were summed up by one of his friends very neatly—I could not have done it better myself: "Your bearer, sir, clever fellow, sir, great rascal." Under his banner I

conquered the East, and, armed with the knowledge he imparted, I have gone on conquering ever since. By the way, this language business is a deep question. You learn so much and you forget so much, and you never seem to speak it when you do know it. The army gentlemen are ingenious in the matter. There was a philanthropic subaltern in the U.P. who, when alarmed by the look of the local alphabet, hired a *munshi* to teach all his servants English, and stopped their pay until they were reasonably proficient. He is a great man now, and all because he knew how to avoid brain-fag. A little, of course, goes a long way; and I have always admired the directness of another subaltern, who, being troubled with frequent bills from the bicycle shop, confided his machine to his bearer in these pregnant terms: "Agar puncture hoga, tum puncture hoga."

There are no snakes in India except those carried about by conjurors; and as for tigers, I have come to think that they mostly exist in the imagination of those who say they have shot them. I am rather suspicious about the skins; and from what a Calcutta shopman once said about the scarcity of cats in Bengal—but here I am on very delicate ground. In any case you

don't meet tigers, as I was led to expect, on your way home from the club; and I have grave doubts about the accuracy of the padre's story that he came down from Hazaribagh with one riding on the step of his bicycle.

But India is not the cheap place of the books. Not my India anyhow. A fowl is not dear at first sight, but when you try to get your teeth into his iron muscles you can see why it is. The payment ought to be on the other side. I have always wondered why some clever cook does not send up one of these armour-plated animals to several dinners in succession. Perhaps such things are done.

Simla in these days is not at all the kind of place it used to be. All the wicked people of the stories have gone away, and now the rowdy men from the plains are sent up there for a week to calm down. When they get back they are quite domesticated; they sigh for lectures, and may be seen nursing the cat in the verandah. I am not sure that this taking away of the good young men of the Government of India has been altogether beneficial for Calcutta. Things certainly happen there now which did not happen before. However, the Royal Commission will no doubt put all that right.

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

WHEN I first came to India, before the baldness of experience had taken the place of the golden curls of youth and hope, I believed everything that anybody said to me. Now, I have suspicions of our chaplain. In those days I was told that I must invest in horseflesh—I think that is the correct expression. People on the ship, knowing fellows who easily in moments of excitement dropped into the vernacular of their particular district, impressed the necessity upon me. But I found after conversing with these gentlemen that I had not got the proper perspective. Dick Turpin and other heroes of my youth, whose acquaintance I had made in times of musical recreation, were men of one horse—Brown Bess, Katerfelto, or what not. It was the one and only one, as fresh and fit after jumping all the toll-bars from London to York as a Calcutta merchant after physical drill in the I.D.F.; equal to anything apparently, from giving you a good day's hunting to

supplying you with a gentle jog in the park. Not so I. No! Henceforth horses were to be ordered in sets like pyjamas, though I had got more of *them*, I found, than I wanted. But I forget; no one on the ship ever talked of horses at all. They spoke of "ponies," which I had hitherto connected with well-to-do boys home for the holidays. Henceforth I was to own many ponies and they were to make me happy. I was told of a famous planter, much respected in the district that he had planted, who kept forty, and at night I used to meditate on him riding like a man in a circus on six at once. It would take a good deal of India, I thought, to make me do that.

When I got to my station I naturally wished to invest in one of these noble animals. I would, I decided, begin gradually, and as some of the ways of horses when described by experts threw me into a cold perspiration, I thought I had better concentrate. "One step enough for me." The difficulty lay in knowing whose advice to follow. Some people said that if you bought an old horse he knew too much; he would lie down, they said, in the middle of a river. There were not any rivers where I lived; still, he might take to doing it on the *maidan*,

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

and even there it was not exactly a pleasant thing to think about, especially if he should wish for a sudden rest while he was going fast. But the playful ways of a young horse were even more alarming. "Grow old along with me" was not written by a man who knew anything about these strange animals. What I saw of young horses and the angles their bodies made with the earth was distinctly discouraging. I tried one belonging to a friend. He went gently enough for about a mile—I did not press him, being engaged in rather awkward manœuvres with the stirrup leathers, which have always presented difficulties to me—and then, well, there came a difference of opinion. I wanted him to go one way; he expressed a decided preference for another. I am above all things a reasonable man, so I offered a third as a compromise, and he stood up on his hind legs in silent but effective protest. There was only one way out of the dilemma, and that was to slip off over his tail. I don't know how I did it, but I found myself on the ground, safe and sound, and in a sense victorious, for the brute had not killed me, as I believe it was his deliberate intention to do. No more young horses for me. I wanted one that would play the game

BENGAL HAGGIS

and remain fairly horizontal. One does not wish to practise Alpine-climbing on a horse.

Then there was the question of polo. "You must play polo," all my friends told me; and the beauty of the station clinched the matter by saying that men looked so graceful when they were playing it. She hadn't seen me at it; but I thought I would look into the matter. Polo, I read, was invented by the Chinese, and, so the book said, was played in Old Testament times, possibly on camels. There is certainly more in it than meets the eye. It looks quite easy. You, the ball, the pony, and the stick. To bring all four fairly well together would seem a tolerably simple business—at least so I thought till I tried; but it isn't. To begin with, the horse often knows more about the game than you do, and turns round with unnecessary and disconcerting rapidity. The poor beast, never having studied for the I.C.S., is ignorant of the very elements of mechanics, or it would know all sorts of useful things about the resultant of forces acting in different directions. The stick, too, can hardly be called an instrument of precision. I am not sure that it is very well adapted for its purpose. There is too little of it for one thing, and I have often

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

thought that something shaped more like a shovel would be better. However, to resume.

I was in the polo stage—there are people, quite respectable people too, I may mention, who have lived and died without having played this awful game—when I hit upon an advertisement: “Tommy Dod, 14.1, aged. Pleasant station hack and confidential trapper. Rather slow at polo. Rs. 600.” This seemed the very thing. “Aged” rather frightened me, as I pictured some poor old beast limping his way towards the knackers; but a horsey man reassured me by saying that every pony that had not had its teeth filed was aged nowadays, and that a horse of twenty would give me lots of fun. I didn’t quite want fun. One doesn’t go in for all the expense and trouble of syces, grasscuts, bridles, crushed food, polo carts, and I don’t know what else, for fun. Still, let that pass. His being rather slow at the game I did not mind at all. I am one of those men who do not object to others going ahead: I might even, I think, be described as self-denying in this respect. Some people are so pushing. Let these thrusters go by and Tommy Dod and I would follow: there are many wholesome proverbs meant to cheer up those who

don't force the pace. Then the idea of a respectable animal who, when polo was over, did not object to go round the station in a confidential manner was distinctly attractive. I didn't quite know what "confidential" meant—indeed the expression rather suggested that I should help to pull the trap; but as that could not be possible, I sent the money and the pony arrived.

"Not very unlike other horses" was my verdict; but perhaps I was rather easily pleased. His legs looked thick and strong, and the main portion of him—the continent, so to speak—was solid, capacious, and round. It was once remarked of a prominent Bengali gentleman, by an enthusiastic and grateful supporter, that he had the legs of an elephant and the belly of a cow. Well, Tommy Dod was something like that; he was distinctly on the large side. Critics might have objected to his tail, which was not a strong feature. But then he made up for it at the other end by having a somewhat prominent Roman nose. There's nothing, I thought at the time, like character in a horse. Doubtless this animal, I mused, "belongs to a respectable family," whose members have in days gone by "rendered valuable services to

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

the British Government." Almost everything living in India I had as yet come across possessed these recommendations, and why not my poor horse? So I dreamed my dream.

When I got him out to the polo ground I awoke. An animal may be "rather slow at polo" in the eulogistic language of the gentleman who has no further use for his services, but that is hardly a fair description of the violent distaste for the game which Tommy Dod at once evinced. I do not altogether blame the brute; I was feeling somewhat the same way myself; and possibly I was a bit wild in my way of using the stick; though here, I may remark, Thomas was guilty of at least contributory negligence, as lawyers call it, for there ought to be plenty of room round the sides of a polo pony to get a chance of hitting the ball. Anyhow, he did not in the least disguise his sentiments, but, after drifting about a bit like a ship out of hand, he simply bolted. In other words, the gentleman who was "slow at polo" converted himself into a "pleasant station hack," and I had plenty of time to think about it as I clung on to him. We did not reappear that day. As a trapper I have less complaint to make, partly because it does not really

BENGAL HAGGIS

matter so much. Given the open road, and nothing on it, why, let a horse run away, and then let him run away again to get home.

I have had many horses since the days of Tommy Dod, but he taught me more than all the rest put together. There are other ways, of course, in which horses come in handy—races, for instance. But I have never been able to understand that business clearly enough to make any money at it. There are too many horses that start for one thing, and there is far too much uncertainty as to what is going to win, in spite of the most exclusive information. So my advice is distinctly in favour of leaving racing alone as a means of adding to one's income.

THE INDIAN CRAFTSMAN

THE INDIAN CRAFTSMAN

WHEN I was young and reverent, and before years of responsibility in this country had made me the frivolous relic I have become, I used to look with awe upon commissions and committees of all kinds. Alas! I have lost a good deal of that youthful faith; the rosy hues of early dawn have indeed faded: ships are but boards after all! What happens is this. If we want something here, or if we don't want something here, or if we don't know whether we do or we don't want it, we appoint a committee. If we are working in the higher values we call it a commission. Then there is a long, long pause. The committee is taking evidence. By the time we have forgotten all about the matter, a report, copious, beautifully bound, sometimes adorned with pictures, appears. We look at it, and read the summary which the *Statesman* kindly provides for us. "How nice!" is all that we say, and we turn to our files again. No, commissions are not every-

BENGAL HAGGIS

thing. So that when I heard that there was to be a commission which was to turn us all into cotton-spinners and the like, what I said was "Hum!"

When I came to India some years ago I had a childlike belief in the Indian craftsman. A marvellous worker, I thought, who spent his off time in reading the *Gita*, and who sang long songs in Sanskrit whilst he was using his tools. So long as it didn't interfere with his toil or keep anybody awake I saw no reason why he shouldn't. The only Indian building of which I had any idea was the Taj Mahal; of this I had studied an ivory model in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. My bungalow, I thought, will be like that. The Indian craftsman shall build it for me.

My bungalow was not exactly like the Taj, though it was roomy enough, and, fortunately, as we shall hereafter see, possessed walls of massy thickness. The drawing-room, something like an empty church, seemed bare, and I inquired for a man to fix me some curtain-rods. Now we were near a city of 80,000 souls, but it seemed a matter of some difficulty to find the exact craftsman for the job. Anyhow, some days elapsed before a very ordinary-

THE INDIAN CRAFTSMAN

looking man turned up carrying a heavy hammer and something that looked like a bow and arrow. I misjudged him. He was a gem. One of the old Masters. He took our instructions and disappeared. Ha! I thought, one of the real true sort! A philosopher as well as a craftsman! He is off to read the *Gita*. When he next came he brought a curious arrangement of bamboos—which I subsequently found made a very insecure ladder—and a mighty iron bar. Several other craftsmen accompanied him. I watched, full of enthusiastic curiosity. The brooding East may plunge in thought when the thundering legions are about, or rather when they aren't, but she emerges occasionally full of vigour and purpose. The head man balanced himself on the bamboos and began a furious attack on my wall, recently colour-washed, with the crowbar. Down came plaster, mud, bricks, odd bits of wood, old clothes, in short the various things they build a house of in India; all fell with clouds of dust in a heap on the floor. My wife shrieked; he took the exclamations for encouragement, and but for the fact that the wall was anything from three to ten feet thick, this inspired destroyer would have made us act the Philistines to his Samson. After he

had made a cavern in which one could comfortably sit, he and his friends retired for quite a long time. “More *Gita*, my dear,” I said. “This man needs much spiritual refreshment; he is not cast in the common mould.” He wasn’t. When we next met him, we thought that Birnam Wood had come to Dunsinane. He bore aloft the vast bough of a forest tree. This he managed with very primitive implements to trim till it was only some six feet long, and then with thundering blows which shook the house, and our poor heads sadly, he drove this timber into the framework of the wall. As he struck each terrible blow he said something, which I told my wife was Sanskrit. Perhaps it was.

In any case, there was the curling branch of a tree sticking firmly out some four feet into our drawing-room. The man smiled, and saying something which I did not understand, he departed, though it was but high noon. A curious idea struck me sometimes in the night-watches, a ghastly one. I was new to the country; life I had heard was cheap in the Orient; was this man by some awful mistake preparing for an execution? We were rather glad, to tell the truth, of a little delay, because

THE INDIAN CRAFTSMAN

we wanted time to think, and also to get over the infernal hammering. Possibly, we came to the conclusion, we had explained ourselves badly, and this was really a curtain-rod, a rustic conception of one, at right angles to the wall. We decided to wait till the gentleman came again; but as some days elapsed we had the bazaar dragged for him, and then found that he was waiting for the plasterer. Great things now happened. The house, or part of it anyway, was rebuilt round the timber which the great man had planted; and then, at a very dramatic moment, he produced a sadly inefficient saw and hacked it off more or less level with the hump in the wall which his genius had created. The same process went on at the other side of the window, and at last, after many days, we had our rod firmly fixed on these two stumps. It will never come down unless the house does, but it slopes at an angle of twenty degrees or so, and the curtains come running down to one end like those in a ship at sea. There you have the man and his work. But we felt that he was wasted in India. Give such a craftsman a London house with a rather complicated hot-water system and a kitchen boiler—what triumphs might he not achieve!

His gentle and protracted activities would produce thoughts too deep for tears. Now what I want to impress is, that the first thing that we have to do is to raise the general level of efficiency and the general level of what we may term satisfaction in India. It will be difficult to get anything, save profanity, from any industrial scheme which depends on men like the *mistri* I have described, or, I may add, while people in general expect no better service than he can perform.

THE AMENITIES OF BRIDGE

THE AMENITIES OF BRIDGE

BRIDGE is a game of skill which is played with cards, and the cards are of four kinds. These facts are tolerably well known, and I only mention them because, from the statements of some writers and talkers on the subject, one might imply that other considerations are of great importance. Luck, for instance, is supposed by all to play a great part, and one way in which you can prove a deep acquaintance with the principles of the game is by suggesting that your opponents owe all their success to that element. "I haven't held a card for weeks"; "Oh, well, if you hold all the cards in the pack!" "Just like my cursed luck!"—are useful phrases to fire at the end of a hand, and they will usually be found to produce considerable effect. Some men's luck would seem to ooze through the seat of their trousers, as they like to sit on a special chair; others are very particular about the colour of the cards they play with. But skill has its uses, and a good

player like myself usually makes money at the business, though possibly not so much as he deserves. To proceed.

It has been suggested that there should be five suits and five players so as to give variety to the game. But in this connection it has been pointed out that the foundation of the large central establishment for European lunatics at Ranchi coincided with the introduction of a reform called "Nullos," and doubtless the Government felt that further change might prove costly and involve additional taxation.

The parties to the game cut for partners. It is not polite, though not altogether unusual, to express dissatisfaction with the result; in any case it is useless to do so, as you have got to play with the man whether you like it or not, and it does not make for friendly relations, as they say in Congress circles, to express too openly your contempt for your partner. Having cut, you sit down and begin to tell the table generally what your play means. This is useful, as it enables your partner (possibly, however, your opponents also) to gain a working knowledge of what is in your hand. "When I call one club, it's an invitation for no trumps"; "when I say two of a suit, it means length with-

THE AMENITIES OF BRIDGE

out strength"; "when I call one no trump, it means that I have a good average hand"; "I never say anything about clubs or diamonds the first round unless I have the top honours"—are all popular clichés. Everybody knows them, but if you bring them out with emphasis, the enemy feels that the lines of entrenchment are being drawn very tightly round him and that his downfall is a moral certainty, something that must and ought to happen. There is no convention for "I have revoked, but I don't think the enemy have noticed it"; but there soon will be; it doesn't do to leave anything to chance if you can help it.

The man who cuts the lowest card deals. At this point the etiquette of the game almost demands that someone should say, "Have a drink, partner?" It is what the clever young men in the secretariat call "the psychological moment." A feeling of subtly diffused friendship is produced, mistakes are for the moment forgotten, and faith, hope, and charity take the place of more strenuous virtues. There are various ways of dealing, but I have never met with one which is above suspicion and yet which will ensure you a decently good hand. If such could be invented it would almost make

BENGAL HAGGIS

up for the things called "partners" with which fate often checks the prancing advance of a good player. Thirteen cards are given to each of the four who are playing. Why thirteen, such an unlucky number? The question is often asked at the Bengal Club, but no satisfactory answer is as yet forthcoming. Possibly we shall never know; it is one of Nature's many mysteries. It is supposed to be an advantage to deal, and hence you must try to deal as often as possible. Not too often, of course, or you will find a coolness in the atmosphere of the bridge-room which may interfere with your full enjoyment of the game.

Supposing that you have dealt, it becomes your duty to make a declaration. There is much more in this apparently simple matter than you would think. It is true that you may say nothing; "no bid" in such cases meaning either absolute weakness or possibly a cunning resolve to lie low and spring upon your adversary, smiting him under the fifth rib with your long suit. The latter course has advocates, especially when it is successful. But it can, remember, lead to unfortunate results, and you may find yourself pouring out the honours of the long suit, which the enemy will not lead for you,

THE AMENITIES OF BRIDGE

amid the delirious ejaculations of your partner. Such things do occur, and they are very trying to all parties concerned. A better way, much favoured by writers on bridge, is the following: If you have anything of a hand, assume a ferocious air, slam your hand face downwards on the table, and say in a tone of combined triumph and contempt, "Three no trumps." It is highly unlikely that anything more will be said until the end of the hand. This may be described in military language as an example of "shock tactics."

When you are not actually leading you must follow suit; that is to say, you must play a card of the same kind as that led. Not to do so is often convenient, but it is considered incorrect play and is penalised accordingly. So avoid a revoke if you can, and remember that there are very few partners who will preserve their equanimity through more than one revoke in the course of a game, even though you may have acted from the best of motives. If you don't know what to play, for goodness' sake abstain from betraying the fact. I remember a well-known exponent of the game in Bombay whose fate it was to have a gentleman whom we will call Jones as a partner more frequently

than he liked. He used to describe the situation thus: "When Jones has to play a card a look of agony comes over his face, he waits two minutes, and then plays the wrong one. The look of agony is at once transferred to the face of his partner." This only goes to show that Jones was a man of little worldly wisdom, and that he had never had the benefit of instruction such as I am giving to the rising generation. When in doubt, play quickly, take a rapid swig at your peg, and remark that it is a warmish or coldish day, as the case may be. This will give an impression of ease and confidence which will go far to relieve the difficulties of the situation. But in any case, keeping in mind the elementary passions that exist, hidden it may be, but potent, in every bosom, don't be slow. Those men who think and think and then play from the wrong hand ought to be interned. Of course, if by pulling out first one card and then another and putting them back you wish to show your partner that you have two cards of that suit, the case is different, though there are, I believe, less ostentatious ways of conveying the same information.

At the close of the hand the correct thing to do is to review the incidents of the game. The

THE AMENITIES OF BRIDGE

object is, of course, to show your partner how many more tricks he might have taken had Nature made him anything else than the ass that he is. Take plenty of time over the process, rub the points well in, assume the air of the president of a court-martial combined with that of a resigned but reproachful martyr, and you will soon be considered a rising player.

THE INDIAN SPORTSMAN

THE INDIAN SPORTSMAN

THERE is a pretty story which I once heard from the pulpit in the days when popular preachers still enlivened their discourse with appropriate anecdotes. A little child asked a friend whether her father was a Christian. "Yes," she answered, "I believe so, only I don't think he has been working at it much lately." When I first landed upon the fertile shores of India, where my many other talents have met with so scanty and grudging a reward, the same answer might have been given to a question as to my sporting prowess. In olden days I had done all sorts of things, had played the usual games, and had duly given them up, with perhaps the exception of tennis. Not that I aimed at a very high standard even there. I could give the daughters of the country clergy a run for their money at a garden-party, and there it about ended.

When, then, I set out for India after I had bought a thickish flannel belt, or rather several belts, without which, especially in hot weather,

BENGAL HAGGIS

I was sure to catch cholera; a natty little set of instruments to deal with a situation in which I was fifty miles from a doctor and bitten by a cobra; a thing in which I was to sleep at night in the train or in the lonely jungle, and many other useful articles, most of which were so made that they would serve two or three purposes in case of need, I began to think out the great question of sport.

I called on an old Anglo-Indian friend who had his house plastered with mangy skins and mouldy heads, and who might therefore be considered an authority. "Bengal," he said, "too many people. You aim at a green pigeon and bring down the village chowkidar." As I thought the latter was some commoner kind of game-bird it didn't seem to matter much, one got something anyway; so I let him run on. "You can shoot, of course?" "Yes," I answered; "that is, I can let it off." His thoughts, however, like the dying gladiator's, were far away. "Well," he mused, "there is rhino, of course, to be got in Assam, and elephant too, and lots of tiger in the Sunderbands and in the forests near Jalpai, but it's a big bundabast." I did not again know exactly what kind of animal a bundabast might be. It seemed safest to say

“Yes, very,” in a non-committal sort of way. “Of course, if you can make friends with a forest officer or a policeman in those parts you will be all right.” It seemed odd about the policeman. Possibly, I thought, justice is in its elementary stages in those parts, and when crime is rampant the policeman and his friends, properly armed, conduct a sort of *battue*—the correct expression, I believe—against all the natives in the district. Exciting it sounded; but, on the other hand, suppose they fired upon you? All this talk did not carry me very far. An agriculturist from the Central Provinces, who had lived in a place bearing the then mysterious name of “Jub,” was more encouraging. “Game!” cried this enthusiast. “I should think so! No need to learn to shoot. You can’t miss ’em. They come in such flocks that the sky gets dark, and you just fire into the brown as often as you can. Why, I remember once at the south—no, was it the north end?—of Funnipore jeel . . .” and then he told me a longish story. This seemed the sort of shooting for me: no anxiety about aiming, and a good bag—from what this hopeful gentleman said a hand-cart would seem to be indicated—at the end of the day.

BENGAL HAGGIS

Then came the question of weapons. People spoke to me of "my guns" as though I were to provide myself with everything from field artillery downwards; but I thought that I would be more modest. I found, after a little confidential conversation with a kindly assistant at the Navy and Army Stores, that these weapons can broadly be divided into two kinds: those that fire one bullet and those that fire several. I must, I said, have one of each. The rifle, for so the former is called, is heavier than the shot-gun, and, as I thought it best to be on the safe side, I chose a large, somewhat old-fashioned article with two barrels and a very thick piece of indiarubber, which my informant said would lessen the shock of recoil. I did not altogether like this notion of recoil, but as the gun was cheap, and fired an enormous bullet, big enough, the shopman said, to stop the Lord Mayor of London, I bought it, and any amount of ingenious and complicated things to keep it clean and tidy with. The case with the whole collection inside weighed about as much as a heavyish railway trunk, and seemed to suggest an elephant as the most suitable animal to carry me to the chase. I ought to add that I declined to buy a telescopic sight

THE INDIAN SPORTSMAN

as both expensive and unfair to the game. Anything that reduces shooting to a certainty, as I was told this did, is to be avoided as distinctly unsportsmanlike. The shot-gun was a simpler affair. The assistant wanted me to take one which jerked the cartridges out when you had done with them, but when I tried this system and found how near the cases came to my own head, I decided in favour of a less modern invention. Two barrels, again, I must have, as there was always a chance, in my case a very decent probability, of my missing with the first. I could have done indeed with three, but guns are not made, it seems, on that scale as yet.

On the ship I learnt a good deal, especially about the pursuit of the tiger. One could, it seemed, go and meet that gentleman on foot; but this method was not recommended, as in case one missed him he usually became very angry as well as hungry, and the chances were one would soon become the *rôt*, as the French call it, of his tiffin. A better way consisted in building a sort of house in a large tree, where, with a bridge-four and plenty of cigars and whisky and sodas, time would pass pleasantly enough till he came underneath. The only

thing was that he might not come underneath at all, but seeing the somewhat elaborate preparations he might go another way. Still, there would always be the bridge. On the whole, it seemed that one might almost as well wait in one's bungalow; and if the number of tigers in India bore any relation to the number that some gentlemen said could be found in their particular districts, there would be a very good chance of seeing one near the kitchen premises, as indeed several gentlemen assured me with much strong language they had done. Looking at the matter philosophically, it seemed a very dangerous business, this tiger-shooting, and ever since, and wisely, I have decided to leave it alone. It's a cruel business, too, because one sometimes wounds the poor beast. I find also that I can buy the skins in Calcutta, and even in London. They manufacture them in both places, and the price is quite reasonable.

When I got to my station I eagerly inquired about the sporting possibilities, but I found that no one had ever seen a tiger. There was much talk, however, of duck and quail, sand-grouse too, people mentioned, and peacocks. But the trouble, I find, with regard to all these birds is not to see them but to hit them. They

all fly so fast, and they won't wait till you take aim. When I first went out I began to take a careful sight at a pigeon on the branch of a tree. My friend said that I must not shoot a sitter. I replied that I had no such prejudices; besides, I was almost sure to kill it outright in my way, whereas, if I took my chance, a very small one, it might get away with some of my shot in its body and die a lingering death. It is, too, an awful waste of cartridges to go on shooting into the air. I did not mind a flock of pigeons; I found I could do rather well with them. But the quail is a low, underhand beast. It lives in a family of about six, and when you get to the hole in which they sit, up they fly in all possible directions. By the time a man has made up his mind which to aim at, there are none to be seen. The peacock, too, has a deceitful way of pretending to go in one direction and really running away in another, which is distinctly unfair to the sportsman who relies upon reasonably honourable dealing.

My experience with buck was so terrible that I hardly like to speak of it. I charged the rifle and lay down behind a bullock-cart which happened to be in an open *maidan* — a good place, I was told, for meeting this unnecessarily shy

BENGAL HAGGIS

and elusive animal. I suppose I dozed. When I woke up I saw, about a hundred yards away, something brown moving in the crop. "A stag!" I whispered; "I can see his antlers." I took as careful an aim as the circumstances permitted, and fired, the recoil sending me backwards over. There was a wild shriek, and an unfortunate but respectable inhabitant of Paddypore will never sit down in comfort for the rest of his days. Our late laureate writes in one of his charming poems:

" But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt
that honour feels,"

and seems to regret the fact. Had he lived in India he would have altered his opinion. When it became known that I agreed to the exorbitant valuation which this avaricious villager placed upon what humorists would call his "suburbs," I became quite a hero; and I was assured that there were quite a number of ladies in that village who were anxious for their husbands to serve as targets at the same rate. No more of such inhuman sport for me! It's too expensive.

A VANISHING CROP IN BENGAL

A VANISHING CROP IN BENGAL

THERE is no doubt about it, this question of baldness is becoming serious. I remember that when I was young I heard with awed attention of the fate of those who derided the prophet with this affliction, but I doubt from the taunts to which I am often exposed whether the lesson has been very generally learned. Possibly the case is confined to prophets, and I have no pretensions in that direction, as frequent and dismal adventures in connection with the Viceroy's Cup have sufficiently demonstrated.

The real difficulty is that baldness reduces one to the level of the commonplace, once and for all. "The baldheaded man on the Brixton bus" we read of, but not exactly with a thrill of admiration. Poets do not pen sonnets to the bald. No great hero of fiction was ever devoid of hair. Even on the stage the bald-headed man is always comic, often it seems to me in a very stupid sort of way. If one writes of a heroine, "In a moment of ecstatic tender-

ness she patted his bald head," who would like to be the "him"? The Cæsars were mostly bald, and so were Socrates and Seneca and other estimable men of long ago, but the fashion seems to have died out. Time, a respectable figure, is always so represented; but then so is Ally Sloper. When I was a boy I was always told that doctors, lawyers, and teachers ought all to be bald, "so as to produce a good impression." Having embraced the last of these professions, I can only say that I know of other and more forcible ways of producing an impression, more stimulating in any case to the seat of wisdom. The educationalist who trusts to a bald head for his effects is a bit out of date according to my experience.

This by the way. Baldness fortunately, like drink, golf, going to races, and other bad habits, comes on slowly, so you have time to look about you. When the bossy protuberances of my intellect first began to be evident, my mother-in-law, in calling attention to the fact, told me that she knew of an excellent remedy. She had tried it on her pug, and that well-fed lady had sprouted afresh in a marvellous way. Yielding to her blandishments in a weak moment, I mixed linseed oil—the coarsest

A VANISHING CROP IN BENGAL

variety, as containing most nourishment—with paraffin, and matted what was left of my hair into a solid mass with the product. The result was exceedingly powerful. I excited, I may say, universal comment, even astonishment. When I entered a drawing-room it was as though the lamp-room of a mofussil station on a metre gauge railway had been let loose. I soon had to give up this awful remedy. Some of my hair came off with it; but my relations said that I had not given the system a fair chance. Perhaps I hadn't.

Soon afterwards my wife was coming out and I was to meet her at Bombay. I wished to produce a favourable impression on the lady, naturally; besides, one often hears people on the landing-stage saying, "Why, Charlie, I didn't think you'd be quite so bald as that," or similar pointless observations. A powerful stimulant, I thought, even at the eleventh hour might do something. The obvious course was to copy the Government of India and call in a specialist. Only I didn't call him in; I went in the tram to his shop. When he heard that I was off to Bombay and could not hold him personally responsible for the result, he sold me a bottle, small, expensive, and con-

taining a highly coloured liquid. It was invented, he said, by a famous pandit who lived about the time of Abraham, and it had been used by viceroys, rajas, and heads of departments ever since. Here, I thought, I have at last got to the bedrock—something straight from the Vedas. When I got to the Taj¹ I began secret and conscientious treatment, not going out much, but rubbing my head in the solitude of my chamber. I would have preferred bridge as a relaxation, but any sacrifice ought to be made, I thought, for the benefit of others. When the happy morn arrived, what was my horror to find that my thinly covered scalp had turned the brightest vermillion! There was no time to try counter-irritants; besides, the skin might have come off, and then I should have been in a pretty pickle. I had simply to run to the Bunder as I was. I concealed the curious state I was in for a long time, saying that I had a cold and must keep my hat on; but one can't exactly lunch in a topee. No, the awful sentence fell at last: "Tibullus! what *have* you been doing with your head?" I faintly said it was the sun.

Since then I have tried other things, being

¹ A hotel in Bombay.

no bigot. One man sold me something that made me run simply screaming round the compound with the agony it produced. It would, he said, make the hair grow on a dining-room table; possibly it was meant for horses. I have held my head downwards for hours, on very good advice, to let the blood feed the roots, but I cannot recommend this exhausting remedy. I have endured the insinuating efforts of any number of hairdressers, most of them quite bald themselves, all beginning, "Getting very thin on the top, sir." Of course it is. Just as if I am likely to be ignorant of the fact! Sometimes, as I look at my pupils, I think that as they all love me very much, and as they all have much more hair than they can ever possibly use, they might each contribute. I have heard of the wonders of transplantation and am quite ready to make the experiment, the colours being, of course, carefully arranged. Possibly one of my readers can tell me an easier remedy. But something must be done soon. I am reduced to a herbaceous border as it is.

SIMLA REVISITED

SIMLA REVISITED

I WAS in some doubt as to where to spend the Pujas,¹ and so was M'Staggers, without whom, of course, I would not venture on any distant expedition. Darjeeling—well, everybody goes there, and you are charged fifteen rupees a day for sleeping with your feet outside a bathroom window. A friend of M'Staggers told me this. He has seen the feet, rows of them, along the main street; so he said. It rains, too, in Darjeeling sometimes. Shillong is also said to be plaguy dear, and they haven't the decency to run a railway up to it. If the motor goes over the *khud* all the intellect in the world won't save you from an uncommonly hard bump at the bottom. In moments of depression we thought of mixed bathing at Puri. There is a place, too, called Cox's Bazaar, where the Chittageese² are said to flock, and where, in consequence, after a light supper off a tin of

¹ A holiday time in Bengal.

² The people of Chittagong.

BENGAL HAGGIS

sardines, you spread your bedding under an umbrella on the seashore. The Indian Ocean is said to be a grand sight from the beach, but M'Staggers hesitated. I was not strong enough, he said. Perhaps he was right.

Thus it struck me that we might face Simla together—no one would think of going there alone—the queen, shall we call it, of the many capitals of India. My acquaintance with the place dates from the times which have been so felicitously presented to an appreciative public by the romantic school of Anglo-Indian writers. We have no such penmen now, and when I pick up the paper I find, apart from my own contributions, nothing but gritty stuff about irrigation and the prices of things. Just as though it matters what a moorghee costs, so long as you get it, and of course so long as it's tender!

However, the Simla of my day. It was full of stern, strong, silent men who, when in any doubt, ordered a three-finger peg; possibly more than one if the case was complex. They were what we call empire-builders when they were reading their files, and perfect devils after office hours. Heroes of this type easily and gracefully got four or five lakhs in debt, and then, to the annoyance of everyone, including

SIMLA REVISITED

their creditors, they usually popped off, with a far-away look in their eyes, just when things were getting a bit complicated. Cholera, or something rapid that you catch by drinking water to show other people that they ought not to do so, was the favourite means of exit. While munching their salmon cutlets—we went it in those days!—they flirted with the Mrs Hawksbees and their like, of whom there were the proper number about. Altogether a stronger, fiercer race than anything you come across now.

As a sort of foil to these great fellows there were the Bobbys and the Tommys and the Jimmys, young chaps with curls, who had mammas to whom one wrote in a roundabout sort of way when they got into trouble. These “boys,” either because they had brains or for some other reason, got posts in one of those departments that require concentrated mental effort for a brief period in the day, and so they were able to give the ladies a good deal of their interesting, if somewhat exhausted, attention. When they met an early and romantic death it was usually in a lonely pass in Afghanistan; and if one compared what had been spent on Jimmy’s education with what it had cost the

gentleman who picked him off to take his B.A. at the University of Jelalabad, the ratio was distressing in the extreme. The boys did not all die, fortunately for the world; indeed, their proper mission in life was to marry the widows of the dark, strong, silent men when they had got safely out of the way. And perhaps that was sufficient punishment for the little peccadilloes they may have committed *en route*. They thought so in any case. A tenor voice carried a long way then—much further, I am afraid, than it does nowadays. It's wonderful how bridge has reduced humanity to a dead, uninteresting level.

Everybody wore long boots in those days and carried a case of papers. The papers used to keep tumbling out, and then everybody in the club knew who was to be the next Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, or the details of some important military operation. When this happened, the man with the iron jaw—and a good deal of it—used to say that he did not know what the devil the Service was coming to, and others took three-finger pegs to keep off the jumps. Such was old Simla, before the days of the young men in spectacles who play jigsaw.

SIMLA REVISITED

I was getting quite sentimental, but M'Staggers is more practical. He suggested that we should secure accommodation on a modest scale, for, as he truly observed, in that way we should have more money to spend on the side-shows. There aren't any side-shows, strictly speaking, in Simla; and I hasten to state this, because some who live there might feel hurt if I described it as like Margate. It isn't a bit like that in reality, even when the authorities are in their friskiest mood. Nowadays, shall I say it, there is a little of the youthful Mrs Kenwigs about good old Mother Simla, "so playful but so severely proper." One can see what M'Staggers means, however. There are lots of ways in which you can get rid of spare cash—that is, of cash you really cannot spare. You soon get tired in Simla, and then you must either go into a shop—places of liquid entertainment are rare—or call a rickshaw; and so what geological people would call the percolation of assets begins.

Simla is on the top of a mountain, or rather it straggles along a number of mountains in a lazy sort of way. It has the Viceroy at one end and the Lieutenant-Governor at the other, so that everyone is kept well in hand. If you

BENGAL HAGGIS

are wise you will stick to the flat. There are roads, lots of them, which lead downhill, but they are not to be recommended (save by way of moral illustration), as you have always to climb up again, and as they are all at least twice as long to go up as to go down. There is also a kind of "super-hill" called Jakko, which the Simla people say is as high as Kinchinjunga. Everybody is told to climb to the top of it. I inquired into the matter privately, and when I found that there were only a few monkeys to be seen at the top, I sent M'Staggers up and he came down like the Tay in spate.

The natives of Simla—I mean, of course, the inhabitants—are very polite and obliging. I should rather describe them as affable. They walk up and down or ride up and down with a serious "don't-you-see-I'm-thinking" sort of look, and then you go home and feel quite happy to have seen the great men who are governing the country. Being always occupied with problems of administration such men do not talk much, but I have been told by those who mix in the higher circles that when they do get started their conversation is wonderful. They tell you all sorts of funny things about the rupee that you never dreamt of before, and

SIMLA REVISITED

how much jute there is in the world and why there isn't any more, and lots of interesting facts like that. When you can do this sort of thing lightly and gracefully, say at a dinner-party, you have acquired the Simla manner. But it takes a long time to learn.

In fact, Simla is a rare place for improving your mind. I sent M'Staggers to a lecture the other day, and he told me that it was either about the appearance or the disappearance of the sun. He didn't seem quite clear as to which. It's rather like that with most things: you come away with a general sort of notion that you know a lot more than you did when you went up—which is as it should be.

There's a nice club in Simla, and the hall porter there knows more about what's going on than most people in this world. You can't take ladies to this club, at least not to the public rooms, but there's a very nice place called the Chalet where they are admitted. In the Chalet people play at treasure hunts and blind-man's buff, and blowing the feather and the like. It's rather the thing to be invited to one of these "candy pulls," but as neither M'Staggers nor I move in the higher official circles we can only speak from hearsay. M'Staggers, however, gave

BENGAL HAGGIS

a dinner, and a very good one too, in the Chalet to some of his old Aberdonian friends, and I proposed the "Land o' Cakes." When I spoke of the purling burns and the bit of hill covered with gorse and thistles on which you sit to gaze at Loch Lomond, I saw a tear stealing down a rugged cheek. I only mention the fact because I afterwards heard the man was an accountant-general, which only shows—but I had better not say what it shows or I might get into trouble. Even accountant-generals have their feelings. We can leave it at that.

Everyone works very hard in Simla, or says he does. They all look very tired at the ten-o'clock breakfast, and no wonder, for they have already put in I don't know how many—the number varies a bit—hours of solid grind. There must be something in the mountain air that keeps them up to the collar. And, of course, they are all picked men—picked men. The ladies work hard too. One of their great occupations consists in running round the whole place dropping cards into little boxes, and then waiting while other people drop cards into theirs. Nothing happens, but it seems to amuse those who do it. I suppose that mountain air makes one easily exhilarated.

THE MYSTERIES OF GOLF

.

THE MYSTERIES OF GOLF

Two years ago my beloved Alma Mater, the Calcutta University, was good enough to award me the Basanta Chandra Bose travelling studentship of rupees 3000 per annum, the condition being that I should devote myself to original research in the West. Being of all things a sportsman and a regular spectator at the soul-stirring contests on the *maidan*, I resolved to investigate the history and the nature of the game of golf. My proposal was graciously accepted by our reverend Vice-Chancellor, and my thesis (300 octavo pages and copious appendices) will appear as soon as I can induce my bookseller to serve the Motherland by publishing it. I might have chosen football or cricket, but as Bengalis are immeasurably superior to the Westerns at those two games, I thought that the East could learn little in that way, and so I fixed on golf, a pastime of some mystery to Asiatics.

Golf has been played, I find, from times of

fabulous antiquity in that part of England which is called Scotland—a bare, bleak country, I may inform my readers, where a Bengali gentleman will find it exceedingly difficult to get anything that he can eat, excepting a tough kind of *sandesb* known from its hardness as Edinburgh Rock, and where the natives are somewhat inclined to overvalue the few things in their land that a stranger may be supposed to want. There is one tie, however, that binds the Scotchman to the Bengali which I must not forget to mention. He wears, at all events on gala days* and when he thinks people are looking at him, a *dhوتي*. It is not white like the Bengali *dhوتي*, but coloured in a lively fashion; indeed some “kilts,” as they are called, are of fierce red hue, and suggest that the wearers at no remote period pursued the butcher’s trade. Be this as it may, the Scotch are the only people in Europe who wear the *dhوتي*, with the possible exception of the Greeks; but the Greek *dhوتي* is starched, and stands out at an angle of forty-five degrees, which would make it an awkward dress to use in a second-class carriage on the Dacca mail, or in the refreshment-tent at the Governor’s garden-parties. To return, however, to golf.

THE MYSTERIES OF GOLF

When I had made a round of the museums in London I came to the conclusion that the game was well known in the Palæolithic age, many of the pieces of flint which are catalogued as axe-heads and the like being really the ends of golf-clubs. I am not sure that here I do not peep over the precipice of a great discovery. May not golf originally have been a modified form of fighting, the recreation of a ferocious and primitive people? The passions aroused and the language used are still very violent, and the costume appropriate to the game has clearly had a martial origin. One cannot say, of course. From Scotland the game has spread to more civilised countries, and in India many very respectable gentlemen are not ashamed to be seen playing at it, though I notice that they always go to remote places to indulge in this curious pursuit, and they disguise themselves so well that you would never guess they were accountants - general or district or sessions judges when you meet them on the links. For this reason, and because of the violence of the passions aroused to which I have already alluded, it is best for a Bengali gentleman not to give any sign of recognition should he suspect who a man disguised as a golfer may really be.

BENGAL HAGGIS

The game is played with a ball which costs rupees two at least, and as it only lasts for a very short time, and as a good player often loses his ball by hitting it so hard that no one knows where it has gone to, the expense is very great. And here I may insert a cautionary suggestion. The onlooker cannot be too careful. I was standing on the links at Sunningdale, a resort of the wealthy and fashionable near London which resembles, though not in all respects, Tollygunj. Suddenly I saw one of these balls at my feet. Anxious to examine its structure at leisure, I picked it up and put it in my pocket. My innocent movement must have been observed, for some players at a great distance, who can have had no possible concern with the ball in question, began to run towards me, using the most horrible language, language such as the Calcutta taxi-driver uses when disappointed in the amount he receives. I could only drop the ball and fly for my life, thankful for that swiftness of foot with which Providence amongst other gifts had endowed me. The hitting is done with the curious weapons I have been speaking about, partly made of wood and partly of iron. They all have different names, and it takes a man a long time before he knows one

THE MYSTERIES OF GOLF

from another; some men never get so far in the game. As these sticks are very heavy and as the strain of the game is very great, you give a man a rupee to carry the bag containing them for you; you are lucky if he does not run away with them, for they are very valuable.

It is very interesting to see a really good player at work. His costume is a very important part of the business. He must wear the sort of trousers that are known as "plus fours," and the more baggy they are the more frightened his opponent becomes. He knows, poor man, that he is, in the picturesque language of the game, "up against hot stuff." Round the golfer's mighty legs (real or artificial) are garters with brightly coloured rosettes. Stockings like the coat of the Himalayan sheep and shoes of great thickness complete the picture. The shoes must be very strong, as the keen player kicks his enemy or dances in moments of excitement. Arrived at the links, the caddie (the man who carries the sticks bears this endearing name) makes a little heap of sand, pats it and puts the ball on the top. You would think that the player would now hit it. Not a bit. He chooses a stick (not always the same of course, for he likes a change), then he stands with his

BENGAL HAGGIS

legs wide apart, like a Vice-Chancellor addressing Convocation, and waves the stick about in the air. He waggles it like the headmaster of a high school when he is going to correct a student under Section 333 of the Educational Code, and then he raises it on high. Be very careful now, oh caddie! If you or anyone else should sneeze or clear the throat or yawn, as likely as not the player will strike you with the iron head of the stick and produce very considerable pain.

The object of the game is to get the ball into one of the little holes which are indicated by a flag. The holes are indeed bigger than the ball, but not much bigger, so that the chance of success is small. If you miss the hole, as you usually do, the correct procedure is to say that you are off your game, that the light is bad, or that it is the caddie's fault. To stimulate the interest in the contest bets are made freely. You play for a ball or for five rupees or for more. I have heard that one very eminent officer of Government in Bengal, when maddened by the frenzy of conflict, used to stake pyjamas and vests or a pair of socks. But that was in his wicked days; he never does such things now.

There is quite a language connected with

THE MYSTERIES OF GOLF

golf which it takes wellnigh a lifetime to acquire. Some words, no doubt, represent the rude exclamations of a barbarous age. Of others one can only say in the language of the Vedas:

“The most high seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it—or perchance even he knows not.”

One becomes “dormy” at a certain point; that is to say, one feels sure of winning the game provided one’s opponent does not resort to violence. This is simple. But what is “two up and four to play,” opinions differ. “Like as you lie” sounds as though one were in a Cockney way insinuating a doubt as to one’s rival’s veracity. Then there is the “stymie.” I asked a Calcutta friend what this might mean, and he said that the Government “laid a stymie” for our beloved University. I must ask the Vice-Chancellor.

When one gets home from golf and has resumed rational dress one’s pleasure is by no means over; in a sense it may be said to be only beginning. You review the day’s exploits carefully at dinner. You begin at the very beginning—the choosing of the ball—and you do not omit a single hole. You tell your friends

—illustrating in England your glory with the fire-irons—exactly how you played every stroke, carry them right through to the eighteenth green, and emerge triumphant and victorious—you may not have been so in reality, but never mind—at the finish. Your friends will perhaps sympathise with an archdeacon—a Scotchman, too, now in heaven—who used to inquire carefully whether there was a golf-course near the hotel he had chosen for his summer holidays. When the landlord assured him that there was, he used to write at once and say that in such a case he would certainly go elsewhere. Being a good man and knowing that the world contains all kinds of strange people, he could stand the golfer, but he drew the line at his talk.

SHILLONG

SHILLONG

It's a queer business, this coming to the hills. I don't know what causes the feeling. Possibly the diminished pressure of the air on the brain makes it swell out in unusual directions. Or it may be the comfy idea that all your special friends are working away in the plains that stimulates you. You feel that you simply must enjoy yourself. Early in my stay here I heard a sermon in the cathedral in which we were told to be as serious as was compatible with keeping ourselves fit; and that is just about what we do. We no doubt eat too much, sleep too much, and play too much; work we leave to workmen. To take a concrete instance. There's the Education Service. I fear no contradiction when I say that for modesty, patience, efficiency, skill at all manner of useful arts and sciences, from getting a post for a student down to toad in the hole, one cannot match them by any similar body of men in India. All England, Scotland, Ireland, and the

BENGAL HAGGIS

Isle of Man have been scratched with a tooth-comb to find them—picked men all of them, picked men: the cream of the mentality of the United Kingdom. Down in the plains these heroes are just like other officers, excepting, as I say, that they are of a slightly finer grade. But up here, with their affectionate pupils safely 5000 feet down the abyss—well, I don't know. They seem to get beyond themselves and burst out into shorts and Burma cheroots, and show all the other usual marks of original sin. When this has gone on long enough the authorities very wisely turn on a lecture, to which, of course, these people must go, and that somehow makes them normal again; they come right with a click. The same process might perhaps be applied in the case of young executive officers—and old ones too at times. A day once a week in the cutcherry would be a fine check to the imagination; this by the way. I took M'Staggers to one of these lectures the other day, and he told me when he got back that he had always feared the worst, and that now he knew exactly what was the matter with him.

We are, then, to a reasonable extent enjoying ourselves up here. The Dacca element, I may

SHILLONG

tell their anxious friends who look up from the bottom of the hill, are doing uncommonly well. Roses adorn their cheeks, and their costumes are the object of much envious admiration. Their golf has reduced even old hands to frenzy.

When we wish to be alone with nature, or with anyone else, we go to Cherrapunjee, or Cherra as the habitués affectionately call it. This is a curious place with quite a history of its own. Someone told me that it was like Colorado, and, not having been there myself, I daresay he was right. It is a place where a good deal of rain falls, and the old chestnut is to the effect that it was thought quite a health resort until a man of science brought a rain gauge up and said that over three thousand feet of solid water fell in the course of the year. But there is some doubt about all this, and I incline to believe the other version of the story, that one of the Shillongese, anxious about the growing popularity of Cherra, slipped a quart of water into the instrument while the observer—a relative, I fancy, of M‘Staggers—was having a whisky and soda in the local bar. Be this as it may, Cherra is not quite the ideal place for a honeymoon by all accounts. There are other trips not quite so difficult: Mawphlong, where

BENGAL HAGGIS

you look down a gorge many thousand feet deep, and the Peak, where you climb a mountain about as high as Kinchinjunga, but without the snow that makes that gentleman so difficult of access. It is on the top of this height that the restless spirits (there are such even in Shillong) wish to see the Shillong of the future. Well, well. Waterfalls are not much in my line as a rule, I having found after much damp experience that it is much easier to get down to them than to get back again. But I went to one of some local celebrity the other day, "The Bishop" by name. In answer to my natural inquiry, a knowing Shillongese told me that this name had been selected because it was the duty of bishops to pour cold water on lots of things that are rather difficult to get rid of. It may be so; "sermons in stones." I ought to mention that I sent M'Staggers to the foot of this fall, and the language that he used when he got back was, fortunately, somewhat veiled in the dialect to which rage always reduces him.

The Shillongese, an affable, kindly race, live in bungalows much like those of other people. These are called castles, halls, and the like, according to the social grade of the occupier.

SHILLONG

Belonging, in consequence of the irony of fate, or whatever Shakespeare would call one of the greatest injustices that have ever disgraced this mighty empire, to one of the lower rungs of the official ladder, we only live in a "dale," and manage to be very happy there. I had almost forgotten to add, that from the names of some of the houses I gather that quite a number of our gallant Allies have settled here. I have not yet made their acquaintance, but I hope to catch a glimpse of *la vie Parisienne* before I go down. When the Shillongese are not drilling they are at the office—very snug little places, smothered in crimson ramblers; when they are not at the office they are usually to be found at the club or knocking balls about on the links. If one feels inclined to go it here one gives a tea at the club. Sometimes, as I have pointed out, there is a lecture to follow, but not always. Bridge is not unknown in Shillong. The wicked play on Sundays, but as I am told that all the winnings are put into the War Loan or the sweeps, even bishops can have little to say. It is a fine forward game that is played, especially in the ladies' room, where a "double" is a very common but no less thrilling incident.

BENGAL HAGGIS

Fishing is practised here by the experts, but as I hear that there is some nasty rule about putting back what one catches I have not yet bought a shrimping-net. As at Simla and elsewhere, a great many people amuse themselves by dropping cards into little boxes, then seeing whether anything will happen. There is also the "Reading Circle," about whose proceedings only dim reports reach me, not being one of the elect; but I believe it's very exciting when you are really in the thick of it. Sewing shirts for soldiers occupies a good many of the pretty sister Susies one sees about; and possibly it's just as well. We know the mischief that Satan finds for idle hands to do, but if he had lived in Shillong he might have found something to say about idle eyes. Oh, the eyes of Shillong! You are really too demmed bewitching, as Mr Mantalini would say. Deep, dreamy blues, oceans of liquid tenderness; honest, searching browns; piercing, soul-revealing greys; flashing, defiant blacks! One day a poet will arise, but I'm sadly afraid they'll have him down to Gauhati before he has accumulated sufficient data to work upon. Bachelors all get engaged here, with the exception of a few tough veterans. Sometimes several ardent competitors choose

SHILLONG

the same beautiful prize, and then the struggle is intense. I have heard stories that would melt the heart of an accountant-general, preparatory stropping of razors on boots, and other things too sad for relation here.

Lovers of "old Shillong" will regret to hear of the passing of one of the historic landmarks of the place. I need hardly say that I allude to the familiar and picturesque water-tank which formed a prominent feature in the grouping of the secretariat buildings. It belonged to the Perpendicular style of architecture, and no doubt served a useful purpose in its day, though the increase in the amount of water taken internally of late perhaps necessitated other and more direct arrangements. The foundation-stone of this interesting structure was, according to the inscription, laid with due pomp and ceremony by Sir Lancelot Hare before the great and wise of old Eastern Bengal. However, new faces, new minds! Many a silent tear was dropped as the P.W.D. authorities gently and reverently carried the fragments of the dear old tank to their new home, though where that is exactly to be I have not as yet been able to make out. Report says that a portico is to be added, and that thus this time-worn public servant will

become one of those cottages which seem so fashionable in Shillong. It is pleasant to think that, smothered in honeysuckle, with its aged sides echoing to the sound of children's voices, its declining years will be happy. There is something after all in what an eminent professor says about the consciences of metals. Even water-tanks have their feelings! But I grow sentimental. The place of this ornamental receptacle has been taken by a very elegant trap-door, which, if left open, may lead to the disappearance of valuable public officers. We shall know where to look for them, which is one comfort; uncertainty is what is most to be dreaded in such cases. All of which goes to prove that Shillong, though possibly at times a dangerous, is a very interesting and delightful location.

GETTING ON

GETTING ON

THE GENTLE ART OF SELF-ADVERTISEMENT

WHEN I first went to India many years ago, as old Joe of Tollygunj says, "things was different." Everyone got promoted by merit, and no one thought of anything but the interests of the public service. When a man couldn't do his work in the day, well, he worked all night, and I've been told that towards the end of the financial year if you strolled into Dalhousie Square about three o'clock in the morning you'd see lights in many different rooms in Writers' Buildings. There were men in those rooms, with sons at Eton, trying to get things into shape for the Accountant-General.

We were a fine race of men in those days. Everyone who writes in the papers says that there is nothing now in India to compare with us, and so it must be true. We drank more for one thing—large bottles of alc before breakfast, and a three-finger peg when we had anything

serious on hand. We swore more, in a quiet, ferocious, and gentlemanly way, and came to the office with a hunting-crop, which we were ready to use if necessary. Joe, to whom I have just referred, and whom I would rather believe than all the Reports of all the Commissions that have ever sat in or on an unfortunate country, agrees with me. "Lor, sir," he said the other day, "folks doesn't stand drinks now in the way they used to do, and as for tips, I might as well be in the Punjab for all I makes here. I think it's the Tote what's had a good deal to do with it. Bettin' by machinery, I call it."

There may be something in the idea. We are told that "high Heaven rejects the lore of nicely calculated less or more"; and this penny-in-the-slot business—but I wander. I was speaking, was I not? of the days when India was India, of the India of my youth. Merit, I say, was recognised then, and that's how I got on. By strict attention to business, too, I was able to put by a bit, so that I write from a nice little villa out Balham way, whilst other people of my time have to live in Jersey, take in lodgers, write for the papers, and do all sorts of odd jobs to pick up a living.

I read in a paper the other Sunday that any

fool could write a play but that it took a real genius to get it acted. It's the same in real life. "All the world's a stage!" I forget who said that; it was either Shakespeare or Sir Harcourt Butler; but anyhow it's true. Nowadays if you want to get on you've got to have something more than merit; you must be able to persuade other people to recognise it. There are various ways of doing this, but there is none better than that of frankly telling everybody that you are something quite out of the common. I remember once dining with a benevolent old gentleman who lived in Park Lane and who had made a vast fortune in an uncommonly short space of time. He was talking to me over the coffee and cigars and giving me the results of his ripe experience. "An advertisement, my boy," he said, "is no good unless a man sees it more than once. You must hammer the impression home."

That is what a young man who wants to get on in India must remember. If he sits in an office and does his duty he may get to heaven, but he will never be a Knight Commander of the Order of the Golden Gridiron, or even a Companion of the same. Not he. No; he must employ subtlety. Great are the uses

of advertisement. Where would some of our best known public servants in India be but for the newspapers? How could we possibly know what fine fellows they are if the papers did not tell us so? In many cases appearances are distinctly against them. We all know—or at any rate we think we all know—that they send the paragraphs themselves; and a very right and proper course it is on their part. If the world is so blind that it cannot recognise my merits, well, it must be made to do so. Hence I say to the young official: Whenever you do anything, or even whenever you don't do anything, in particular, sit down and write a full account of it to the newspapers. There is an art in it, of course. I could supply—from long experience as a reader of such matters—forms that would serve for almost every emergency. The main point is to describe yourself as “our popular Commissioner—Collector—Principal—Sanitary Inspector,” or whatever it is. Probably you are not specially popular—the world cares little for its benefactors—never mind; go on saying it as often as you can and the impression will be made. This is one of the most important instances of the value of auto-suggestion, a principle very widely

GETTING ON

employed in modern medicine, but useful in other directions.

Such is the beginning of wisdom; there are, of course, higher reaches. The art is carefully studied nowadays, and at critical periods by a neat paragraph one suggests one's self as the only possible man for a particular post that is going. The master in the craft sometimes gets himself put on a commission or committee or something of the kind; he then suggests the creation of a new post of great dignity and emolument; lastly he secures his own appointment to it. It all looks as simple as tumbling off a gate, but I can assure my readers that only a long course of Simla training or more than a touch of original genius makes it possible. There is a passage in La Bruyère—but men who bring off such delicate *coups* have no time for La Bruyère.

If you are not very good at advertising yourself—we are not all equally gifted—there are other ways of getting on. They are slower, but they have their little excitements. One of the best known is that of making yourself so generally disagreeable that the authorities resort to promotion as the only possible means of getting rid of you. This is called “taking your own

line." When it succeeds, you are spoken of as "a man of considerable independence of character." When it fails, as it sometimes does, you are described as *tukrari*, and in confidential reports you are said to be "lacking in tact." The bad stations in every province are full of men who have tried this system and failed. It is indeed very dangerous—almost as dangerous as doing your duty, and we all know where that leads a man.

More safe and pleasant is the method which those of pliant disposition usually resort to—that of attaching yourself and your fortunes to some rising star of greater magnitude than you are. You tie yourself to the tail of the rocket, so to speak. But be quite sure, my friend, that you have found the real thing. You can sink with a man as well as rise with him. And always be ready to cut the painter if the steamer to which your little barque is moored seems to be getting into stormy waters. Private feelings, I need hardly say, ought never to be allowed to influence a public man. That would never do.

A DACCADREAM

A DACCA DREAM

A LAY SERMON

I WENT to church the other day. I often do so, but this occasion is impressed on my mind owing to a strange dream I had there. Old men dream dreams in Dacca, sometimes even when our worthy chaplain is preaching. It was wrong, no doubt, but I slept. I can only plead in extenuation that I had attended a meeting of the Special Board of Electro-psychology the day before, and everyone connected with higher education knows how exhausting these functions are. It is not only all that one says one's self—few people are much fatigued by that; no, it is the listening to all the nonsense that other folks talk that does for one. Committees of all kinds ought to consist, I think, of one speaking and five voting members; if you speak, you should lose the right to vote. Even tea provided by the University on a very comforting scale does not entirely undo the mischief.

However, my slumbers were like those invoked in the evening hymn.

I thought I was at the gate of Paradise—Calcutta friends tell me that it is about as far as I shall ever get, but let that pass; there are members of the Bengal Club who will never get even as far as I did. We all know the pleasant story of the Irish priest. It is rather to the point. A jovial fellow, the sort of man you meet hurrying towards the bridge-room along Chowringhee every evening, said to him one day, "Father, when you are in heaven and you hear me knocking at the door, will you borrow St Peter's key and let me in?" "Bedad, my boy," answered the padre, "I think it would be much better if I borrowed the key of the other place and let you out." But I digress.

All sorts of people were hurrying to get in. Some had splendid uniforms, some were in cap and gown, and some had tried to catch a touch of local colour by coming in *dhotis*. You could see, too, cunning fellows who had tried to combine various effects, so as to leave nothing to chance, and who wore the coat of an honorary magistrate with homespun continuations of the correct Ghandi cut. Some had a stick in their hand, and others a bunch of bananas,

A DACCA DREAM

whilst others again carried the spear with which the warlike non-co-operator encourages other people to get into the front line of attack. And there were viceroys in tennis togs, and judges in plus threes, and I don't know what all. Ladies too, the English ones in the choicest products of the Army and Navy Stores, and the Bengalis decked with the gay *saris* of Cornwallis Street. It was all very incongruous; but you can't help what happens in a dream, and even a Dacca magistrate can't run you in for what goes on there, however much he may, very properly, feel inclined to do so. We were a queer crowd certainly, and when I looked round I felt that we were very like the lot one sees at the Calcutta races on a Saturday. Only we were anxious; we had more to lose.

St Peter seemed very stern and severe. His face had that kind of look that comes over a commissioner when you send him in too low down at a dinner-party. He got rather worried, as we all kept pushing forward, just as the ticket clerk gets worried with the crowd that pushes off a Narayanganj steamer. The illustration is rather appropriate, because you get to Dacca by way of Narayanganj, and Dacca is the most heavenly place in

India; anyhow the inhabitants, some of them, are very like angels. But to resume. Something had to be done, and so St Peter began to call out in a loud voice. "The private *entrée* is suspended!" was his first direction. This was an awful blow to a lot of very exalted people who had had their eye on a small gang-way by which they had hoped to get in before the others. But worse was to come. "No one," he went on, "is to come this way who has borne a prominent part in making India what she is, who has been mentioned with approval in the Report of a Royal Commission, or who is one of the most illustrious Indians of our time." This caused an awful tumult amongst the viceroys and secretaries of state and members of council. I saw a gentleman with pearls on his trousers in tears, and I heard a tall man—I had better not describe him more closely in these ticklish times—who had quietly taken off his gold-laced coat offering quite a large sum for the loan of a *chaddar*. St Peter took no notice, but went on: "All those whose ancestors have rendered important service to the British Government take six paces to the rear!" Here again there was some disappointment, and any number of those valuable citizens

whose coats of arms is the potato stepped quietly backwards. But I noticed that they did not feel their disgrace quite so much as the others—they looked as though they had been in similar difficulties before. Still St Peter went on: “All holders of testimonials saying that they are well qualified for any post which a benign Government will give them are to throw them overboard and start afresh.” Now there was trouble if you like! The mass that went over the side nearly upset the balance of the steamer—we were firmly fixed on the steamer by this time in my dream—and I heard one poor fellow crying out that he had only the bill of lading, as his certificates had been too bulky to go anywhere else than with the jute in the hold. Then came the final touch: “All moneylenders, all disturbers of the peace, all those who are living at the expense of someone else in the service of the Motherland, form up in line on the right.” Such a lot they were, many of them most respectable men; it seemed as though half the bar libraries in India were there. But whether they liked it or not—there was no end of talking, I can assure you—they all had to stand out. And I noticed a stout fellow with a *lathi* looking after them. “Where

to?" he asked. "Stokehold!" roared St Peter. And down they went into the red glare under the boiler, forked in by couples, and a smell arose like that you get in passing a *burra sahib's* kitchen when there's a dinner-party on.

There had been a terrible clearance and very few of us were left. I was there, of course, though I did not feel at all sure that I was *pucca*. But the rest were of quite a different type from what one expected: decent merchants, unknown collectors, modest deputy *babus*, a professor or two—not at all prominent men; I had heard of them as good men in the old days—one or two missionaries, and so forth. I saw only one lawyer, and he seemed not a little surprised to find himself safe. I think, too, that I caught sight of an accountant-general wearing spectacles and carrying a file. The rest were all peasants with hard hands and loud voices. Altogether they were not at all the kind of men you meet at official parties or at a hill station. And as I was thinking about it all I came to, so to speak, and the chaplain was saying something about the first being last and the last first, which looks rather as if the Civil Service Regulations did not apply in heaven, and as if they did not know the order

A DACCA DREAM

of precedence at the end of the Civil List. It only shows what strange things some people, even chaplains, believe nowadays.

I see that I have omitted a matter of considerable public interest. We all know the story of the reporter who, on being asked at an evangelistic meeting whether he was saved, replied, "No, I am a member of the Press," as though that settled the matter. However, to allay anxiety in some quarters I hasten to add that although very few newspaper men were amongst the elect, I saw the editor of the *Statesman*; I was told also that the editor of the *Bengalee* would certainly have been there had he not been engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to find the editor of another Calcutta paper who is supposed on very good authority to have always belonged to the world of spirits.

WAS SHAKESPEARE A BENGALI?

WAS SHAKESPEARE A BENGALI ?

NEW LIGHT ON HIS PLAYS

As time goes on I take deeper and deeper interest in the great question of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. I do not mind confessing that when I have been busy over the books that prove that Bacon wrote them, I have often felt in the same position as Lewis Carroll was in with regard to Homer; that is to say, I have not been quite sure whether Shakespeare's plays were written by Shakespeare or by another man—or woman—of the same name. But of late new light has been streaming through the windows of my brain. I feel like Keats when he looked into Chapman's Homer, or like Lord Chelmsford and Mr Montagu when they struck fire from each other's intellects and evolved the Reform Scheme out of their combined mentality. Are we sure that these plays come from the West after all? Hitherto the theory that holds the field has been that they were written

BENGAL HAGGIS

during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I (suspiciously long ago, I may remark) by a cunning Englishman with an eye to the Eastern market. The East India Company's agents had told him what the actual and potential population of the country was, and, after a rapid calculation of the value of the royalties when every man, woman, and child could be forced to buy a copy of his plays, he had set to work. The result was conveyed to India by the shipload, duly insured. Specially bound copies were provided for rajas, and those who paid pretty smartly were allowed to say they had written the plays themselves. There is much to be said for this idea, and it meets many difficulties in the present situation. But it does not really explain how it is that no Bengali had thought out the scheme for himself. The bar library was in existence at the time. Professors were abundant, some teaching under a peepul tree, others in kings' palaces. Vice-chancellors were not unknown. Students there were by the million, and everyone of them had pearls or diamonds or cocoa-nuts which he or she (for the ladies were quite as highly educated as the gentlemen in that golden age) was anxious to exchange for a book. In short, all

WAS SHAKESPEARE A BENGALI?

the elements which make for a local solution were in being.

Now my conclusion is that the name Shakespeare is really the Westernised form of Shakopadia, who, as everyone knows, was a great Bengali writer of the Mogul epoch, and who is mentioned with respect in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Further, just as modern investigation has shown that there was no Black Hole of Calcutta and no Indian Mutiny, so we shall find out that the West has robbed the East of one of its finest producers of imaginative literature. It is really too bad. The English, as we know, are strongly suspected of a design, only defeated by Mr Gandhi, to steal the poor Indian's pen-ultimate *dhoti*. Can we then be surprised if so grasping a race lays its sacrilegious hands upon the literary output of a long-suffering and generous people?

I am the more convinced when I examine the individual plays. Take *Hamlet*. The names, of course, are transmuted, but the ideas are thoroughly Indian. Hamlet is stout, "fat and scant of breath," according to his mother—and she ought to know—rather short tempered too; an ordinary young Bengali gentleman. Something of a philosopher—all Bengalis are. The

king is, of course, some Raja. They were curious fellows in the Mogul days—much more singular than they are to-day. You had to be very careful about what you ate when you came to see them. The *Merchant of Venice* has been much misunderstood by commentators. Shylock is always thought to be a Jew, which is quite a mistake. He really represents the Englishman of all time—always out to make money, and always ready to cut and eat a steak when and where he can. Antonio is, of course, Abinas—the B becomes N according to Grimm's law—and Bassanio, Basanta; there were lots of Abinases and Basantas about then as now; two young zemindars, no doubt; one could easily work the thing out in detail.

People ask me about *The Tempest*, but really there is no stronger proof of my theory. This Shakopadia was something of a prophet in the sense that he wrote for our day as well as for his own. Great men, Bengali great men, are like that. Prospero, it seems to me, must have been meant for the Vice-Chancellor of a modern Indian University; there are so many that it is difficult to say exactly which. Note the situation: all seems troubled and confused; matriculation fees don't come in at the proper

rate; post-graduate lecturers want their stipends every month; examination papers leak out to the wrong people; the Government of India, like Ruskin, keeps poking its tusk in; a lot of yapping Englishmen keep worrying about the accounts; in short, everything happens that a V.C. does not like. But wait a bit. He waves his wand, and suddenly he is able, and at some length too, to announce that all is well. Caliban, again, must, can only, be the English educationist. He is imported at some cost—a gross, heavy kind of fellow, who is always grumbling. As long as he digs in the fields of learning for pignuts, and finds them, all goes pretty smoothly. But he gets uppish, grunts about efficiency, moves troublesome resolutions in the Senate, and I don't know all what. Then he has to be put in his place and told what to do. The Vice-Chancellor threatens that “urchins” shall “work upon” him—clearly an allusion to a coming strike with its disagreeable incidents. Ariel is described as “an airy spirit.” I fancy this is an old misprint in the first folio; it should read “hairy,” the allusion being to the beard that a man of such importance wears. For I have always thought that Ariel was a registrar. In modern times his work is not so

easy as it was in the days of Shakopadia, but there has always been a good deal of mystery or enchantment attached to the office.

There are many interesting identifications still to be attempted, and possibly our finer spirits in the colleges will induce the students to do a little original work in this direction. But they must be careful, or the arrow may hit the mark nearer home than they quite like. We all know the tale about the worthy head of a Scotch divinity class who invited a bright youth to lead in prayer, and was horrified when he began, "Lord, help our poor professor, for he is old and feeble; strengthen him that he may go before us like a he-goat before his flock." There are dangers of other kinds. Whom had this writer in mind when he drew the character of Falstaff? Too keen a shot might land one in the Presidency Jail. I shiver to think of the possibility, and hasten to say that my remarks refer to no one in particular, but rather to quint-essences of large classes of the whole Indian or English race, as the case may be.

COMMISSIONS

COMMISSIONS

“The subjects’ grief comes through commissions.”

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VIII*, I. 2.

WHEN some ask for a change to be made,
And we don’t want to give them permission,
We can always reply,
With a tear in our eye,
That we’re going to appoint a commission.

If we don’t know precisely what’s wrong,
And we talk very big of “suspicion,”
Although it’s past cure,
There’s balm, to be sure,
In that time-honoured phrase — “a com-
mission.”

When a college, a crop, the police,
Seem in rather a shaky condition,
There’s nothing goes down
With the man about town
Like a heavily weighted commission.

BENGAL HAGGIS

When we can't get a chap to make boots, -
Though we feed him with tariff re-
vision,
We can send quite a lot
On the Swadeshi trot
If we frighten them with a commission.

When the salt duty fails to respond,
As we *can't* tax the means of nutrition,
The way to get round
The ryot is found
By the brains of a cunning commission.

So if men catch the fever by day,
And by night begin talking sedition,
It seems quite absurd,
We pronounce but the word,
They are cured by a threatened com-
mission.

When the members get sulky and hot,
And speak of their work with derision,
Just chirp C.I.E.,
And as brisk as a bee
Is the man on a royal commission.

COMMISSIONS

The results take an age to obtain,
And the world has forgotten its mission;
But the members are gay,
For they draw good T.A.,
And there's bridge on a well-picked com-
mission.

The report must get carefully round
Ten years or so after submission,
Then the clever men state,
As it's much out of date—
Things are ripe for another commission.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
NEILL AND CO., LTD.,
EDINBURGH